

SHIFTING GEARS

THE CHANGING MEANING OF WORK IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1920-1980

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS

INTERVIEWEE: Rosie St. Jean

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

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TRANSCRIBER: Lynda Luden

MN: You call yourself Rosie, don't you? You don't say Rosaire, you say Rosie?

RSJ: Yeah, everybody calls me Rosie.

MN: Rosie St. Jean.

RSJ: My mother called me Rosaire.

MN: Oh, your mother called you Rosaire, everybody else--(laughs).

RSJ: She used to.

MN: Well, why don't we start then with your family actually. Were you born in Gardner?

RSJ: No, I was born in Canada. My parents moved here when I was 18 months old. In fact, my mother always told me I learned to walk in the Winchendon Railroad Depoot. I took my first steps. And then when I was five years old my father was killed in an industrial accident where Brown, Howe and Robichaud is today, on Main Street here. So my mother couldn't speak English so she went back to Canada. And when I got to be thirteen years old she said I better go back so you kids can learn to speak English. So we came back.

MN: How many kids were you?

RSJ: I was the oldest. I had a brother a year and a half

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younger than me. And we lived on Oriol Street at the time.

MN: Oil Street?

RSJ: Oriole.

MN: Oh.

RSJ: And then we came back, and I have two uncles who had come down from Canada, were working here in the factories. So when we came back we, my uncles told my mother, send them to public school, they'll learn much faster if they go to public school. So I'm 13 years old, I think I'm a man and there I am in the second grade.

MN: Oh.

RSJ: I come back at noon, I told my mother, I said "Hey, I'm not going back, Ma." And we were living right on the, close to the Holy Rosary school, we were living on Green street. And so then I went to Holy Rosary. I spent two years in the sixth, then I went to Connor! St. Public School, two years in the seventh. And I had wonderful teachers in both schools. And I had a Miss Donegan, that was my English teacher at Connor Street Schbo!l. Her, the principal there was Mrs. O'Connor, wonderful woman, they were very nice, and the, in fact they talked me into going to high school, they helped me tremendously.

MN: They helped you - sorry?

RSJ: They helped me tremendously, oh they.... So, then after I went in the service I wasn't sorry that I went to high school

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because that helped a lot in the service, you know, you...

MN: Were you able to finish high school?

RSJ: Oh yes, yes, I finished high school, I didn't go in the service, I was put in a supportive bracket because I was working supporting my mother and my sister. So, and then I enlisted,, gee, there was nobody in town, I was kind of lonesome, and I enlisted as a, B5 program, and Navy. And I was sent to Williams College. From there I went to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Franklin Mars School is the name of the school I went.

MN: Franklin Mars School?

RSJ: Yes, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And, ah...

MN: To study aviation?

RSJ: No, that's where we were studying all the branches of weather, and when I went to Lancaster that's when they start _____ the place. Williams, we didn't have any place there-- we were just school work, math and all that stuff. And ah, the war started down in Lancaster, they sent me to Bainbridge, Maryland to boot camp. And from there I signed up for aviation machinest school (?) I was sent to Jacksonville, Florida. From there I was sent to Seattle, Washington, beautiful country, and the aboard ship, overseas. I came overseas, aboard ship and one of the first fellows I met was Hadchucavis, Butch Hadjucavis, whom I had gone to high school with. And they had just come back, they had a terrible time out there, they were out in the heaviest fighting there was in the South Pacific. And, uh, "By God," he says, "it's good to see you", he sa

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he said, "I'm glad you come to replace me!" (chuckles)
They had them through hell. So then I served overseas, I
was in Japan during the war and _____ Japan when
the war ended. Come back home three days after Christmas,
1946. Went back to work at Florence Stove, where I had worked
previously, previous to going to the service.

MN: You'd worked there before you went into the service?

RSJ: Yeah, I had worked there and I had worked here because
Florence Stove kind of slowed down, they changed over for
war work, see. So I started at Florence Stove when I was in
high school. I was working the foundry, shifting molds
afternoons. We used to get out one o'clock in the afternoon
in those days, and...And I started taking a few night courses
at Holy Cross Collège in labor relations and things like that. I
got interested in unions.

MN: This is after you came back from the service?

RSJ: After I was back, when I started union work. And this
_____ in industrial relations, they have a course there,
they've had that for years at Holy Cross College.

MN: What possessed you to take up that course?

RSJ: Well, I was interested in Unions.

MN: Do you know why you became interested in unions?

RSJ: Well, the thing was that we had had some terrible
times on account of the people working in factories and...
A man'd go in in the morning, and the foreman'd say, "Well,
I can't use you this morning but come back and check, see if
I have work for you this afternoon." And you hear those things,

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and you study them, and you get to say, "Well, gee, there must be a better way."

MN: And you heard, that was from your experience, you saw people come in and be sent home?

RSJ: No, I, ah, some of the fellows I worked with were telling me about, they were older than I was and they were telling me about these things. So I became very interested and I became very interested, and I went two years in a row and it was very, very good, But then we were sitting there and you're discussing contracts and they'd come out with these big contracts for General Motors and outfits like that. Compared to the chair makers in the city, your eyes would bug out and when you'd hear these salaries that were paid. but it was, it was wonderful, in the sense of the word, that it didn't make you bitter, it made you understand the reasons for certain things both, on both sides, see?

MN: These courses did?

RSJ: These courses did, yeah.

MN: Was Florence Stove unionized at the time?

RSH: Florence was, yeah, they were both unionized. But I, when I started going to school there I was working at Heywood's.

MN: Oh, you quit Florence Stove?

RSJ: I just, well, Florence Stove was seasonal, see. During the summertime they had a lot of work, during the early fall you got laid off. So I got a job in Heywoods, that was steady work.

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MN: And Florence Stove would do that every year, lay people off in the fall, pick them up again, what? January, February?

RSJ: Well, yeah, not, they had some old timers that worked year round but not that many, really. But as far as the new people, they'd be the first to go. It was, it was a good place to work, they paid a higher wage than anyone around. But it's, a lot of people didn't like that seasonal work. Besides that, I was working in an enamel room, which, in the summertime, was a hundred some odd degrees, where they bake that enamel.. But I was on the 11 to 7 shift, so...

MN: You were cooler?

RSJ: That'd give me a chance to do my training and if I _____ I'd swap evenings with another guy, he'd work my shift and I'd work his. And, uh, it was very good for me.

MN: And what year did you start at Heywood's then?

RSJ: Ah, this is when I come out of the service, I started at Heywood's. I had worked there previously, when I got laid off at Florence Stove, and uh....

MN: Before the war?

RSJ: Yeah, because I think I was working at Heywood's when I went in the service, in fact. And, uh, they were very good shops, Heywood's was a good shop to work at. In those days it was a family type of affair. They'd run these big parties and everybody was there and you could take guests in some of them. And they had the, we used to have a dance hall in

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South Gardner, the old Arcadia. They'd rent that and, gee, you wouldn't believe the mobs they had up there for their dances and parties. And personally, I may have missed something, but usually when you got big crowds like that you know, there's trouble, but I never, never saw any trouble.

Then I remember one year, the train used to go out, the railroad track, you know. They picked us up there and they had the-- they went to Canobie Lake. And ah, oh, what a mob there was there. I remember it because I boxed an exhibition down there. I don't remember what year it was. But, there were good times. Then when they had their annual corn roast, honest, you wouldn't believe it. It wasn't only the employees, it was whole families, you know.

MN: And did you have to pay? Or they paid for you? Or it didn't matter?

RSJ: I didn't matter, they didn't pay. I think that they had a social club that would raise the money. And the social club was running it and, of course, if they ran short of money, I, I'm not sure, but I'm almost positive that they got help from the people who ran the shop. And then even Florence Stove had their social club they used to have, there was great rivalry between Florence Stove and Heywood's, you know.

MN: Oh, there was?

RSJ: Oh, yeah, we al---, we both had good bowling teams and boy, what a rivalry there was, and then we had a, what they call, a dusty league, they play evenings down at the old Wildwood Field, and they had the Heywood-Wakefield team,

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Florence Stove team --

MN: Softball?

RSJ: Baseball. That was hard ball. And there was a lot of rivalry there, too. They had the PACC, the clubs of--

MN: (unintelligible)_____.

RSJ: Well, this was a league, a local league, and they used mostly local products, now, you see, they have, in softball, they have people from all over. Once in a while, they got away from that, but once in a while they'd sneak in some guy that was a pretty good pitcher, or something, they'd pay him a few bucks, and that would cause a big argument. Geez, -- (both laugh) There was a fella by the name Fred Warren from Win--, uh, Orange, terrific pitcher, geez, he, he didn't make the big leagues, but he went as far-- When Fred come in, that would start the argument, he was, he was a terrific pitcher. But, used to see, there was a big grass area at Wildwood Field in those days, Wildwood Field was adjacent to Waterford School, and you'd be amazed at the amount of people down there watching those games. Mothers with their babies, whole families. 'Course you didn't have TV and radio, they had radio, but they'd go down and watch their sons and husbands play baseball. So it was very nice, it was a nice small town--

MN: Did you used to read the Shop News, too?

RSJ: Oh, Shop News, that was a must. Then they were very good to us, I remember that I worked here when I went in the

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service I left here, Heywood's, because they used to send us the Shop News, and --

MN: In the service?

RSJ: In the service, yeah, which was very good. It was very well appreciated, too, you know, anything from home. And it wasn't a shabby paper, you've seen the finished product, terrific.

MN: Did you mind that they didn't print any union news in the company newspaper?

RSJ: No, after, when the, the, if I remember correctly, I think there were times they'd print news, we had meetings, or something like that, but as the years went along, you know, this family thing kind of broke away, and, uh, how can I describe the, in other words, you had a different type of work, and they were changing from war work, going back to furniture making, and things like that, and there was a, an awful lot of work back logged that they, and a lot of people would get married, you know, the war was just over with, the change over, so they didn't have time for all those things that they could get involved in, previous to that, although they still had their Christmas parties for the kids, which were also something else again. And, and this was all through the social club, you know.

MN: So they, do you think it was after the war that the, sort of, family feeling broke down.

RSJ: Few years after the war, I would say, 3 or 4 years,

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but that's when the union started, union started getting stronger, I think. And I think the first, there was no union here during the war that I can recall. There was a lot of girls here, though, you'd come home on leave, wait for the time that people got out of work, it was all women. (laughs)

MN: Oh, yeah?

RSJ: Yeah, but I think a couple years, a year or so after that, this unionized, and--

MN: Why, why, why was there a need for union at Heywood-Wakefield? Or did people feel like there was a need for it?

RSJ: There was definitely, the thing was, you had a need for unions, there's a lot of people tell you, well, "I own a shop, we don't need a union, I treat my people right." That's, you can do that when you have a small outfit. When you have, it isn't only the owner of the company, it's the jealousy among the employees. All right, you have to think of both sides. As far as the company's concerned, they didn't mind, I, but they weren't in love with the unions. But if you had a union that was someone you could talk to and settle things I think it was better to have a union, cause unions take away alot of the employees problems away from certain phases of work.

MN: Like what?

MSJ: Well, if you had a piecework rate. And they'd send a time study man to study you, this time study man would, alot of them were guys that never worked, I'm talking about presses

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now, or any type of piecework, there was a lot of piecework in those day, and you had quality plus quantity,, mostly quality, you know, some guys might be terrific pieceworkers, but they weren't putting out the quality work that you need. Well, they'd raise heck to the union and we'd call 'em up and tell 'em, we say, Geez, or we didn't have to call them, just say, well, the boss's on my back. So, we'd go out and check and see what they're doing, then we'd tell them, Gee, I have to agree with them, you know, you know. because, but these things, I think all in all, I think some com--, some unions helped an awful lot. Cause I remember , _____ (unintelligible), they vote to go on strike. Another thing, we'd leave here and we'd meet at the City Hall Auditorium. Well, there'r three bars on the way, some of the guys'd leave early, by the time they got down there, it was difficult for me, or anyone, to get in front of them and tell them, we're going to do this, No, they want to fight right away. And you knew who it was, it was the same guys that _____.

MN: These would be the union meetings after work at Heywood's?

RSJ: After work, yes.

MN: How often would you have them?

RSJ: Well, when it come contract time, came, our contract came in the fall and we'd have to discuss with the employees what we were going to do, and what was what. They're offering us this, this is what they're offering us, and what d'ya think?

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Cause you had to take a vote of the membership before anything was accomplished.

MN: Would there be contracts every year, or every three years?

RSJ: Uh, I think they were mostly for 2 or 3 years. But, we, but we had to take care of those things, see. (chuckles)

I was _____ (unintelligible) meetings. I started out in club meetings, I _____ union meetings, but I come out I had a job, I lived in Springfield a couple years, I got a job tending bar, and uh, used to be the tough districts, Springfield's a nice city, I was in kind of a tough district and you get so much for tending bar, and so much for booking the horses. Finally, they had a big raid, I got out of town, and come back home, I ended up in this. (LAUGHS) The main thing is, you know, cause I _____ (unintelligible) those meetings. I never seen anything like it. Been to meetings with other unions. When I lived in Springfield, I belonged to a union there. In those days, you had to go to the union, or else they had closed shops, that's when they started so-called closed shops. And, and that gave me a problem up here at Heywood's. I had 3 fellas from _____ (unintelligible), nice fellas, but their religion wouldn't let 'em join the union.

MN: What religion?

RSJ: I don't remember what they were, but I'm positive that their religion wouldn't let em--

MN: What town in New Hampshire?

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RSJ: I think _____ or somewhere around there. We had people from all over working down here, you know. And I went to see the guy, you know. Employee jealousy, these guys say, "Well, how come these guys not paying any dues?" And this and that. So we went down, and I told em, "Jesus," I said, course I learned a little bit going to night school at Holy Cross, I said, "Why don't you guys pay the same amount of dues, and we'll give it to your favorite charity." So that kind of broke that up. And they give so much, then I give it back and tell them give it to the church. Oh, I did, Mr. Binnall was _____. And we got by that, but we didn't have too, too many. This being a French Catholic town. Mostly French and Polish people.

MN: Are they supportive of union, the French and Polish?

RSJ: Oh, yeah, they were, they were, but you've been talking to these people. You have some of these people that Heywood-Wakefield was their life, it's hard to imagine, but it's truth. You can't find people as dedicated today as you had in those days.

MN: I don't understand why not, though, I don't know what--

RSJ: I, I, well, I think that, I can't understand, I think the thing is this day and age the young people want to move, and I don't blame them. Move ahead, move ahead, do it in a hurry. In those days, look at the automobiles you have today. You didn't have that many automobiles. That's why the factory's right center of town, in New England, people didn't have cars. I think that's one of the main things, because, Geez, if you

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tell one of the young fellas from school today, _____
(unintelligible), you tell em, well, Geez, I had a job in
Heywood, I stayed there--, you stayed there that long? Why?
Well, it was a good place to work, Heywood-Wakefield was a
very good place to work. And, well, I don't stay in a place
that long, you know, just, ~~sdid they own you?~~ _____
(unintelligible), so things like that are ... It's not the
was it used to be, the way of life has changed so much,
that it's unbelievable.

MN: What'd they mean, did they own you?

RSJ: Well, you figure, if you stay in a place that long,
Geez, something must attract you, keep you there.

MN: What did you do when you started a Heywood-Wakefield,
or when you came back after the war? What was your job then?

RSJ: I was the, I started work in the press room. On a
power _____, cutting the steel.

MN: Oh, the metal shop?

RSJ: The metal shop, yeah, I, when the metal shop closed,
that's when I left.

MN: And how long did you, you worked there a long time all
together...

RSJ: I must have...10 or 12 years, and then they closed the
metal shop and I went to work at Raytheon. _____
(unintelligible) in Law---.

MN: Andover?

RSJ: Yeah, Andover. And I worked there about 6, 7 month.
They give me a job cause the guy had cut his fingers on _____.

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Just until he come back, so he comes back, I comes home, what you do, get fired? I had told her before, she had forgotten, they'd give me a job until the guy comes back. But you had a lot of people from Gardner after Florence Stove closed who wanted to work, Lowell, Andover, working for Raytheon.

MN: Huh. They moved to Raytheon from Heywood-Wakefield?

(Background noise)

RSJ: They did what?

MN: They moved to Raytheon from Heywood-Wakefield?

RSJ: No, from Florence Stove, Florence Stove closed down, see.

MN: So you were in the press room at Heywood's or Florence Stove?

RSJ: Both.

MN: Uh huh.

RSJ: Course, when I first got out of high school, I was working the foundry, shifting molds, and then I got a job in the enamel room, where it was so hot, as I was telling you. Then, when I come back, out of the service, I went back to Florence Stove in the press room.

MN: OK. That's where you worked for 10 years, in Florence Stove in the press room?

RSJ: Well, up to, no, I worked here, 10 or 12 years at Heywood-Wakefield.

MN: OK.

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RSJ: So....., well, I'm going to have to leave, I have another appointment.

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MN: OK, today is Octoberr 5th, 1988, back with Rosie St. Jean. OK, well, I think we left off, I was trying to go over it and I think we more or less left off after you'd come back from the war and you started work again at Heywood-Wakefield. We were a little bit past that, I think, but--

RSJ: Well, we, yeah, at the time there were almost 1200 people working there. And, course, there was a great demand for furniture because the veterans were getting married and you never had too much of inventory because things were going so fast and there's a lot of new homes being built and the market was great. And then things started to get a little more complicated, most of us were getting out of the service between '45 and '47. Those who served in World War II. And hooked on to different jobs here and there, our lives, alot of us got mar--, got married, some were married while they were in the service, a lot of us weren't, got married and when we come out, I was out of the service 3, 3 years, I think, when I got married. And the, as far as different shops were concerned, as I mentioned previously, Florence Stove was seasonal work,

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although it was the best paying shop in town. And, at the ' time, Simplex hadn't developed to the point where they are today where they have so many employees. In those days they didn't have that many. Although I remember riding the buses in Seattle, Washington when I was stationed there and seeing the seats made by Heywood-Wakefield. Then the hanger where the civilians were working, were fixing our airplanes, the the time clock, Simplex Time Recorder Co., Gardner, Mass. I brought it to the attention of, of my fellow mates in the Navy, well, this is where I'm from. Course things that remind you of home just like that, and you're always proud of your home town. And so I went back to work at Heywood's and things were going well, well, you've asked me many times, well, 2 or 3 times, why union? Well, what people don't seem to see is that there are times when the union is beneficial to the company as much as it is to the employees. And I don't mean because there's collusion between the two. I mean that the unions have certain rules that they set, that they want the employees to follow. They've always been accused of taking care of the guy that doesn't want to do anything, I've never seen it that way, but that's the accusations made against unions, and also, in my union work, the years that I worked for the union, I, you get to know different kinds of people. Number one that strike you right off the bat are the boss haters. You always have those. I don't care if the good Lord himself is their boss, they hate him.

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And that's the type of people they are. I mean, they might be the nicest people in the world, the boss, forget it.

MN: They just grow up believing management-----?

RSJ: That's apparently it, I don't know, but they're just boss haters, period. And you get to know the foremen, too.

The foremen have to earn a living and not all foremen are people who can handle people, either. So those are fixes that develop and that's why you have unions. Then the working conditions change tremendously, in the years, the company itself, the people who were with the company, having worked all kind of overtime and all that. During the war, when they were producing for the war effort. So that the change-over was was gradual, there was still some war work, but--. They were in the business making furniture, good furniture.

Heywood-Wakefield's known all over for their good furniture. So then things started coming up, started after the development down south where some of the factories, you had all your cart mills from Lawrence, Lowell, Haverhill, moved down south. And, of course, we're yelling here up north, you're going down because you get cheaper labor--

MN: Oh, there was a hostility, they were angry?

RSJ: Oh, definitely, And so Heywood-Wakefield started to talk about building a plant in Tennessee. So they went ahead and built a plant and talks developed at the time that then in September of 1940, this is what I caught up on yesterday at the library, in 1956, September, we started negotiations on a new

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contract for the people at Heywood-Wakefield. I think there was a little over 1100 people working here then.

MN: And then they'd all ready done the plant down in Tennessee.

RSJ: And that, that's, that's--

MN: _____(unintelligible).

RSJ: --conclusion they were building, and, and then the talks had back and forth about the negotiations and the company had a big ad in the paper, I think the 17th of September, or the 19th, saying what they were operating.

MN: They put an ad in the Gardner News or the Shop News?

RSJ: Big ad in the Gardner News, the Shop News, in a little while was discontinued for six years, and it was all pertaining to the strike. Why have a Shop News, you not have employees, thing like that. So, and then there was another ad the 27th, signed by Mr. Greenwood what they had offered and what they would do, and then a few pieces in the paper, Mr. Greenwood, this and that. We had two meetings, in the sec-, the first meeting, they gave permission to the officers of the local to call a strike if things didn't change.

MN: The--

RSJ: That meeting was held in the City Hall auditorium.

The members of the union gave the employees, the bargaining committee, the right to call a strike. We sat in the evenings, we sat in the afternoon, be there until 5:00 or 6:00 at nights in the upstairs office, talking about contracts and this and

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that, except the nights I was going to, twice a week I was going to Holy Cross in the Labor Relations program. And I had a, _____ (unintelligible), couple of other fellows with me, and so we travel to Worchester. And so we kept negotiating, and there was a set, and the advice was this and that. You know the pretty part about it, I remember when I was going to, first came here from Canada, I was going to grammar school, and I used to sell newspapers, and we had one fella selling at the flat iron building and the other fella was around the corner where the gas stations used to be, and then we went on the square. I remember those days well, times were tough, it was deep in the depression, and every once in a while, a headline in the Gardner News, Heywood-Wakefield, 5% raise. 5%, 50¢ an hour's not much, but it was a lot in those days, and, you know, even, we talk about going on strike and all that, knowing most of the people in the plant and things like that, knowing the way they talk towards the company. They had, a lot of them, had 30, 40 years, in fact, some 50 years. And they had that attachment, they were just like a family, and a few, if you were a union representative, you were either a rat or a good guy, one of the two, and but times get to the point where even some of the old employees says, we had to do something or everything will go down south, and this and that, and they were really afraid of their positions.

MN: Oh, so they thought the whole company was going to close.

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RSJ: That's the thought that they had in their mind. That eventually the company would be gone.

MN: I never thought of that, although I knew there was this whole movement down south, I never thought of the impact on the people who were left.

RSJ: Well, they had, a lot of these people, French, Polish, they had people that lived in Lowell, Haverhill, relatives, they knew what happened to those people, so the media wasn't as prevalent as it is today, but still it was beginning to ~~move~~ in those days, and so finally we went on strike, we set up our picket lines and it, once in a while, some the fellas got pretty bitter, but we didn't have any trouble. Course accusations, Heywood- Wakefield parked their trucks out on Market St. and they accused us of puncturing their tires and this and that. You know, there's always some stuff going on we made sure that, we posted people down there to make sure that nobody would touch those trucks because we figured that was a trap, you know. But, so those things are common to a strike, apparently, I'd never been in a strike before, my first time.

MN: And were you the steward at the time?

RSJ: I was the head steward, I was the chairman of the union. They elect a chairman, you elect a chairman every year and I was the chairman.

MN: For the whole plant?

RSJ: For the whole plant.

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MN: So that was a lot of responsibility?

RSJ: Very much, very much. My phone would ring all night. Some the the guys, well, one thing I'll say about, we had our union meetings, and some of the guys would get out at 3:00 and they'd stop and, there was three bars open between here and City Hall, by the time they got there, they were in no mood for a meeting, either they wanted to fight me or they wanted to fight the company. I was in a spot where it was kind of tight, and (coughs) I had just got married, '56, I got married in '49, I'd been married 6 years already and those phone calls were kind of scary to my wife--

MN: Threatening calls?

RSJ: Some were. Some were. And whoever calling, I'd take the phone and tell them, "Look, where can I meet you." And most of the time they didn't want to meet me. And, "Who's talking?" And if they wouldn't say who they were, I'd just hang up on them. The same policy as I carry now as a councilor, people call me, I say "Who am I speaking to?" If they don't tell me, there's no use talking to them, what good can I do them. But anyway, it went on that way, and -. I had a friend of mine ran a tavern on Parker St. and he said, "Geez, do you need some money, I'll give you a job, you work a few hours." I started working there, and then I started thinking about it, this is not fair, these other guys aren't working, I'm working in there, I'm attracting them down there. Seeing that I was down there that would, you know, draw the crowd, Heywood-

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Wake--, so I quit. Anyway, I wasn't getting any pay because I was trusting those guys for drinks, and what pay, what little pay I had, I owed it at the end of the week. I worked there a week, about 8 days, so I got out of there and started working, doing more work on the union angle of it. We went to the negotiator, the main government negotiator was from Clinton, Tom McNally, terrific guys, course those negotiators, they're there to settle the strike. No matter who wins or who loses, doesn't matter to them as long as strike's settled. Tom had been a great athlete at Holy Cross College, he was quite a track man, being an ardent sport fan, I'd read about him in his years in college, He was just a kid and getting to know him was great thing. I admired the guy, you know, and--. So one evening he said, course now I'm talking, these things I can say, cause Tom and all is dead, and _____ Taylor is dead, two of the greatest men that, I personally think they did an awful lot for this town and, even though a lot of people _____ (unintelligible), they never robbed anybody, they're just as honest as the day is long. I want it understood, because I admired those two men.

MN: Who is it, Tom Binnall?

RSJ: Tom Binnall.

MN: B-i-n-a-l?

RSJ: Uh, B-i-n-n, I think it was a double N.

MN: And what did they--?

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RSJ: They named the Binnall House after him.

MN: Oh, and the other man's name?

RSJ: Lubert Taylor. And they, one was president, and I don't know what the title of the other fella, I read it yesterday, but I've forgotten. And the, one evening, Tom McNally called me up and he says, "I've just been talking to Tom and Lubert," and he says, "would you care to go speak to the company attorney. I said, "Where's he live?" He says, "He lives in," excuse me, "Concord, Lexington." Excuse me, so we went, I said "Sure, I'll take a shower and dress up." And so I took a shower and dressed up and, this was _____ (unintelligible) I'm telling you, this was October 1. So we went to see this fellow. I don't know, what a home he had. And showed us his hobby was flowers, and I didn't care about his hobby. I was happy that he had a beautiful home. First thing he offered us a drink. I drank, but I wouldn't accept a drink when I was on a mission like that, I refused him. And we kept talking, arguing back and forth, it was obvious that we weren't getting anywhere with this guy, and I told Tom, "This is useless, Tom." I told Tom McNally, who was a negotiator, a federal negotiator, I said, "We're not getting anywhere." So about 1:00 in the morning, I said, "Let's go home." I said, "I'll have that drink now," I said, "before we leave." (laughs) And I had a drink with the guy and the next day I remember Holy Cross and B.C. were playing, and I said, "I hope B.C. whips the hell out of your Holy Cross people." I was just _____

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(unintelligible) I had to write him a note, then. But we didn't accomplish a thing, then we had, the bargaining committee of the union was invited to go to Boston, and discuss with some other lawyer, that's where their office was, this place where I went, that was the guy's home. But they had an office in Boston, so I went with the fellas on the bargaining committee and the minute we got that, we were in this big building in Boston, and the minute we got in the conference room, which was like this, guy picked up a chair and looked under, that was a habit of the guys that worked furniture, to look under it to see where it was made. "Made in Japan" Well, that was it, I knew nothing would be accomplished that day. The lawyers come in and so the first one of the guys got up and said, "What the hell you doing with Japanese furniture? And you're trying to keep our wages down?" And that was ruined, right off the bat. We didn't accomplish anything. Eventually, well, the, the company called a meeting at City Hall and, I'm surprised there wasn't a war. And--

MN: The company called the meeting?

RSJ: Oh, yeah, they called the meeting for those employees that wanted to attend and, strike's a tough business, tell ya, then there were a lot of accusations, back and forth, course, we were trying to do as well as we could for our people, the other shops in surrounding area that were trying to help us out. Besides that the stores, we had a Sears-Roebuck

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in town and the different stores said they would trust the employees until they went back to work, which was great, but then, that's a plus, but it has it's minuses, too. You have the type of people who look for an opportunity like that. First thing I know, they call me from New Hampshire, this guy so -and-so, he works at Heywood-Wakefield, he bought a trailer and is he all right? Well, Jesus, that puts me in a hell of a spot. And I know the guy's not all right cause I know the guy is just looking for such an offer, and I say, "No, we're on strike" and I said, "he doesn't have any money." In other words, I'd tell them the truth, but I knew about the guy because I served with him and that would be a slur against the other guys that paid their bills or never had a bill, and you'd be amazed at the number of calls just from those people. They'd call the union hall with the same questions and that was a mess, it was, I was at the age where it didn't bother me, I know, it bothered me some, but didn't bother me that much, the only thing that I wanted get the men back to work. Well, that went on for weeks, eight long weeks, and the holidays come up, October, November, and then December creeping up on us and eventually we settled. I don't recall just how, what we settled on, but--

MN: But you were comfortable with the settlement?

RSJ: Somewhat you were--, but then after you come back to work those people who hadn't gone on strike, there was a war

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between them and the people who had been on. And--

MN: Had some people continued to work during the strike?

RSJ: No, they didn't work, but they didn't participate, they'd stand on the corner and razz the guys that were picket line. I had a buddy _____(unintelligible) course the wife and I'd been married 6 years, here we are on a strike, she's working, my wife worked 30 years for the telephone company. And she comes over to pick me up after I was through with my duty on picket line, "Jesus, who's car you got?" She says, "I just bought it." I said, "We're on strike and you just bought a car?" And I said, "I'm the chairman of the union." "Oh," she said, "I never thought of that." "Well," I said, "you better explain who paid for that car." "You know, just one of the incidents that happened, I know there were many more, but some come back to me when I --

MN: People would think you got money under the table or something?

RSJ: Well, that's it. See, I was right up there so that they were suspicious of me no matter how I moved. Those who were, had a lot of faith in me, were a great help, and those who didn't were trying to, they were very suspicious and thinking I get money under the table, this and that. But, course my wife went back to the telephone company and there were a lot of girls working there and she told them what happened, they certainly razzed her, and the word got

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around that she had paid for the car. I didn't, I didn't have a cent to my name. But then, when we were, the day that we were going to walk out on strike I got a call I don't remember if it was Mr. Greenwood, or George Heywood, asking me if I would request the fellas, whatever they were doing right then, to finish it up so there wouldn't be anything unfinished left. So I went around the plant, and I think I had one of the company men with me asking the fellas and they all agreed to finish the work that they were doing. So many years of a family type affair that infused in these people that this was a terrible strike. Both ways. What I mean is this. Some of those poor guys, they didn't get up in the morning, go to Heywood-Wakefield, they didn't know where the hell to go, pardon the expression. It was a good company to work for, but the minute you touch somebody's income, it doesn't take long for them to feel hurt, really deep. And I'll say it to you again, you said, "Why unions?" Unions are just as beneficial to both sides, if they handle right. I'm not talking about unions that are run by Mafia or anybody like that, I'm talking good, strong, local union like we had. There's a lot of times they'd have trouble, they'd run to me and I take care of it. They accuse you of protecting the guy that doesn't want to do anything. We had some guys like that, they'd come up to me and say, "Geez, we can't get anything out of that guy." I'd talk to the guy, I'd tell him just what I

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had been told, and I said, "You better straighten out, or I can't, I can't back you up any more. This is it." Or some guys were drinking, they'd come to work half in the bag, I'd get a call, I'd go down see the guy, I'd say, "Look, go home, don't come back this week, they'll fire you.", there was nothing I could do. You know, there's a right and a wrong, and I wasn't, this wasn't collusion with the company, was just sense of keeping a job, do good work. And I think I was very fortunate. It showed in later years when I ran for office and I've been one of the top vote-getters for the past 28 years. And, good Lord willing, I have one more year to go and then I've had it. No more politics.

MN: Be hard to stay away, though, won't it?

RSJ: Well, that's what my wife says. But, no, it's, this is a good city, I've been very fortunate, I've had good teachers, oh I meant to bring the teacher I had for my, that letter I had from one of my former grammar school teachers that every once in a while when I'm down in the dumps, I read that, makes me feel good. Builds up my ego.

MN: What kind of relationship did you have with management? When you were a steward in the union?

RSJ: The only relationship I really had with the union, with the management, was when we'd call a meeting, and we'd sit with each other and --. The day of the strike when I took that, it was with John Heywood, we went around, this and that.

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John Heywood, I respected all those guys, they were---

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MN: You were telling me how you went around with John Heywood that day?

RSJ: Hmmm?

MN: Can you say that part again, you went around with John Heywood?

RSJ: I went around with John Heywood, that's when I was asking the fellas to finish what they were on. And that's when we're going through the factory, we're looking down, I looks out on Pine St. and I see this truck and I said, "This so-and-so, I don't want in the company." "Oh, yes, " he said, "those are the people that went down--" They had had a furniture show, I don't remember where, Chicago or somewhere, and he said, "They went down," and he said, "they're trying to get the other company not to do any shipping for us, that they want the shipping." I said, "John, we never had anything to do with them and I don't blame you." He says, "If ever this gets over," he says, "they'll never get our business. " And he was right. I felt the same way he did. There were other things that happened, you know, that, that, that the company, I don't

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know how to say, you have a big company, they make a lot of money. It's a family affair, the family is rich, that, that's the history of all industries, I'm talking about the New England industries, it was the same thing in Lawrence, Lowell, Haverhill, they were building, all these mills that they had were people that came down from England, it was family affairs. They were, in those days you had the working man and you had the man who ran the factory, and it was a different / (unintelligible). You know, they talk about the caste system in England, the caste system, I mean, in England and foreign countries, well, it was the same thing here but didn't try to show it too much. And even an animal rebels if you don't feed him, and wages, that's people's bread and butter. So even though there's that great family thing --, I get a kick out of it, the (unintelligible) tried the same thing but it wasn't anything --, imagine having the, when the tracks used to run on the other side of the building, having a train there and filling it up with about 1500 people and go to Canobie Lake on an all day outing, sure, geez, a lot of the guys say I'd rather get that than my pay, but, it looked great, it was a great thing. It was one day up there and they enjoyed it. Every year, they had to have their corn roast. Every year they'd have 12, 1500 people there. Which was great for the town, there's no doubt about it.

MN: But they used that instead of giving a raise?

RSJ: Well, you can say that from both sides. I say, "Well, geez, why don't they give me that money in my pay instead of

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doing that?" But then, the overall effect, how you gonna fight it?

MN: And year later when people talk to me about it, it's not the wages they got, they remember the day at Canobie Lake.

RSJ: Sure, I remember that day, I made money.

MN: Oh, cause you were boxing?

RSJ: Yeah, I boxed, they paid, I don't know what they paid me. I boxed an exhibition up there. I wasn't working here then, I was, that was 15, 16.

MN: But that, in the long run, that meant more than the money, didn't it?

RSJ: It did, it did to the locality. You know, some of the Heywood people, relatives, and everything, and that meant more to the locality than, -- and don't forget, we're _____ (unintelligible) those pay raises. This was the deep depression, and Heywood-Wakefield gives a 5% raise. Big letters, you know, and it was good, it was great, because you didn't see any other companies giving any raises. It wasn't much, but still it was a raise. And, a human being is a funny animal, there are things that may please him, and things that displease you, but you touch his bread and butter, that's where it hurts.

MN: It sounds like from what you're describing about walking around the company with John Heywood that you felt attached to them, also.

RSJ: No, the reason I did that is because the people had faith in me. If the people hadn't had faith in me, I wouldn't have

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done it, I'd have been accused of collusion. I know the people had a lot of faith in me, and this was the least we could do, and one thing it did, and that's what I was thinking of at the time, we didn't leave here in a rage, and aggravated. They had done something for the company and vice versa. I didn't like it, "Jesus, " I said, "let me think it over, because, " I says, "I get _____ (unintelligible) with this."

MN: Oh, to be seen walking around with him?

RSJ: That's right, and asking the fellas to please finish what they were doing.

MN: Did you, were you torn also between a sense of loyalty to the company and--?

RSJ. No, No not that much, because my soul was with the union and my members. I couldn't go with anyone else, I had, as I say, 1100 or more people, and I had to answer to them. I didn't have to answer to the company, if, if I did anything wrong the company could accuse me. Why I didn't want any accusations from my people. I was in a tough spot. Otherwise, I wouldn't have gone around. John and I always got along very well. I always thought a lot of John, he was a great gentleman. But we were never that close, cause, you know, and I never was to anyone.

MN: What about with Greenwood?

RSJ: Hmmm?

MN: What about with Richard Greenwood?

RSJ: Well, he was, how can I put that without insulting anyone. He was a big cheese, he was the man that, well, he

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knew his name, if your name is Greenwood, or Heywood, you had meant to be politically, so the old Yankee spirit is still around haunting us. Then, (mumbles) could you tear that up--- I'm not too familiar with that, with the change, coming over from Wakefield, they had the rattan shop up there or something and that's what they did in Wakefield, they moved it up here, a lot of people from Wakefield moved here, but that's before my days, I'm not familiar with that.

MN: And what, you know, after you said, that when the strike was over, people had a different feeling between each other, did they have a different feeling about the company, too? I mean, did the strike change this whole feeling of the rich person controlling it---

RSJ: No, no, not that much, It was just that you had, well, how could I put it? Some guy that would have been a good union man, worked hard for the union, and all that, happened to be with a guy that showed a lot of indifference, but was getting the same thing. That kind of caused a little friction. The thing that (coughs) or something, we had fellas working here from New Hampshire, Ipswich, New Hampshire and, they were from all over, people, towns, and all _____ (unintelligible) and we had a couple of fellas came in and this union steward come up to me and he said, "Hey, Rosie, " he says, "these guys won't join the union." In those days, we had a closed shop, see, I says, "Why?" "Well, their religion." "Well, I'll speak to 'em." So I went down to see the guys and tell em, talk to em, and they were right, their religion, I didn't know that then,

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I checked up on it, which was true. "Well," I says, "The guys around you resent this. The idea is that you don't belong to the union." The one guy says, "No, it's not what they resent, they resent that we're not paying dues." I said, "That, too." I says, "You can keep working, but," I says, "I want you to do one thing. Whenever we pay for union dues," I said, "I want you to give it to your steward and have him give it to your favority charity." So then they had a choice, if they wanted to stay, they'd have to give their favority charity, which, they were anti -union, their religion was. What are you going to do? And they stayed. they stayed on --

MN: And they gave the money?

RSJ: --quite a few, yeah, quite a few years. That's another thing, we got accused of taking money from the people, this and that, I said, "Look, this--", I'm surprised that I'm smart enough to think of something like that," I said, "Otherwise these are two good workers we'd had to get rid of," They were good workers.

MN: And that was a good idea.

RSJ: Well, I know that going to Holy Cross, the old fathers, Callahan, who was originally from Fitchberg, he was the guy that was running that school, he started that school, Holy Cross, labor relations, which was very good, but then we started negotiating contracts for big steel, the big coal companies, what the heck were we doing there, two-bit operations

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like a wood shop, these big outfits, but I enjoyed it. I enjoyed every, I was lucky I was healthy and I had a lot of people that _____(unintelligible) and things like that. Course, I didn't make all friends, but you can't do it and dislike _____(unintelligible).

MN: What happened at the meetings, you said the company called a meeting?

RSJ: Well, they went up there, that was a very, they had their attorney talking, there, I can't remember the guy's name, and some of their bosses, Well, by this time, I think we'd been out six weeks. And, oh, we also had the priests and the ministers telling us that we should go back to work, or something, there's a ad in the paper, I wonder who paid for that?

MN: In the Gardner News?

RSJ: Yeah, I wonder who paid for that? And then they brought in this minister from the Cape, and he was a labor minister, he was going to talk, so that's when they had that meeting at the City Hall Auditorium, and he made a big speil and I don't think he was that impressive, he didn't trade in miracles. We didn't either but we weren't in that business. And, as I said, the stores in town wereo terrific, told the people they would trust them.

MN: And the clergy people encouraged the workers to go back?

RSJ: Well, no, they said, they didn't say it that way. They

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said, I was reading that ad yesterday. It said, to settle the strike, no matter who wins or loses. Something to that effect, and, course, they have large responsibility, too, apparently.

MN: Did people listen to them?

RSJ: No, no, we were still out 2 or 3 weeks later. I don 't remember just what the date was that we came back, but I can check on it and report back to you.

MN: Cause someone else told me that, they said, someone told them when the strike would end. And, sure enough, it was gonna end like that, they said, "How do you know?" And they said, "Well, I'll tell you later." And then they said, later when the strike was over, they said, "How did you know it was going to end?" They said, "Well, suddenly the church wasn't getting any money, churches around town."

RSJ: Well, you hear those stories, you hear alot of stories. I was right on the inside, I know what happened. The reason it was ~~settled~~ was the company gave a little more than they had originally mentioned, and negotiations, as far as we were concerned, we sat down, talked it over, nobody made any big money on the strike, in fact, it hurt everybody, the company, it hurt us, hurt everyone. But the thing was that you can only push people so far, when they start reading about a plant being built in Tennessee, that big ad in the paper is telling how, big piece of paper, not an ad, ~~se~~ something else, telling how labor is cheaper in Tennessee and this and that. Geez,

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you know, these guys, can read. That didn't help matters, I mean, in fact, I had this old timer walking the picket line, I had this old timer ahead of me, and this guy come walking through, a young fella, walking through the picket line, three times the size of this guy, and this guy grabed him (laughs) and took a swipe at him. Geez, I grabbed the big guy, I says, I told the little guy, I said, "This guy'll kill you." He's bigger. "I don't care if I die right now." (Both laugh) You know, when you get a spirit like that, what are you going to do? He'd been at Heywood's since he was 15 years old. He's the guy that was telling, they'd come up and the boss would tell em, "I've got nothing this morning, but come back this afternoon, I may have some work." But they never complained. They were very fair. He said, "If they told you that, if there was work, you worked. So, he said, "That's why I'm sworn to the union, he says, "Now, " he says, "we know we go to work and we're there." So I've, now that I know what roles, they have a beautiful machine at the library, I'll read the rest of that tape to the end of the union strike. But it does bring back memories, you know, different things that happened.

MN: Do you have to go, or can I ask you a few more questions?

RSJ: You may, if you want to, yeah.

MN: I don't want to keep you if you have to--. While you were there, did they have layoffs, seasonal layoffs, like

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at Florence Stove? Did they have that?

RSJ: No, no, Heywood was a steady, very steady business.

It was, the only time, layoff we had was in the metal shop and on a car seat, cause the car seat orders, put in trains and buses, use a lot of metal, see. And when they didn't have any orders, it was slow, but that didn't happen too often, cause they were selling a lot of car seats. That was the car seat division, so called. Upholstering, all the other furniture went full blast, most of the year round.

(Voices in the background)

MN: Oh, OK, Let me go back for a minute and ask you, you, when you were working at Heywood-Wakefield, after the war and during the strike, what was your job?

RSJ: I worked in the press room, on the press, first there was a, worked in cutting metal to different dimensions for different jobs, and then I was a, working piece work on the presses.

MN: On the metal presses.'

RSJ: Metal presses and when they did away with that, they moved that to Tennessee, and that's when I left the company, I don't remember what year that was.

MN: But it was sometime after '56, anyway.

RSJ: Oh, definitely, definitely.

MN: So were you a foreman, or a --?

RSJ: No, No. I was just a peon, a peon, I was just a worker working piece work, you'd get so much a hundred and this and that.

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But alot of my time was spent, such a big lay-out, big plant, I'd be, a lot of times, miss a lot of my work, the union would pay me, I'd get about, oh, a third of what I earned, and it took a lot, financially out of me, to do the work, so that's why finally I gave it up, I--

MN: Gave up the union work?

RSJ: No, yeah, the union work, I stayed in the union but I gave up the union work, because I couldn't--. And the other thing was, I got out of there, it wasn't too long after '56 that I got out because, well, it might have been 5, 5,6 years, because I had never worked in wood, I didn't know anything about wood work, so I finally got a job at Raytheon. I couldn't, this is just suspicion that I had, but it seemed to me that nobody in town wanted me. I had that in my mind. I can't accuse anyone, or anything, but I was always suspicious, because the answers that I got when I went looking for work. So I got a job at Raytheon in And-, in Andover. And--

MN: But you said you didn't stay there very long, did you?

RSJ: Well, I stayed there 5, 6 years after the strike ended. But I was, I think I was there 5, 6, 5 years, anyway, and then they cut out the metal, they took it down to Tennessee. So, that's when they were closing out the department, they said they had other jobs, but --

MN: And did you notice that your work was, was the atmosphere in the plant any different after the strike?

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RSJ: Not really that much. It didn't take that long before everything started to jell and, personally, I think that, on both sides it made our union work much easier.

MN: Made the union work easier?

RSJ: That's right, both the union and the company, because as big as strike as it was, you know, much, people, some people were getting hurt, the company got hurt and this and that, they all seemed to be resigned to the fact, let's get down and go to work and make up. And it was, uh, a good way to feel at the time. Because it was quite a few hard feeling, even in families, when you see a guy, one guy on the picket line, and then his father wouldn't be on the picket line and, or his brother and things like that, you know, there's an awful lot --.

MN: Yeah, cause I also heard from someone else, he said that you might have worked with somebody for 25 years, but if you walked the picket line and he didn't, afterwards there was never the same feeling.

RSJ: You know what the worst feeling is? When it was declared, we're going on strike, we walk out, I'm the chairman, I'm the first guy there. I don't dare turn around, I'm wondering if there's anybody behind me? Did you ever have that feeling?

MN: Just walking down the street sometimes at night?

RSJ: Yeah, you know what I mean? You just, you want to be alone when you're walking down the street at night, I want to have somebody behind me. You get what I mean?

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MN: Yeah.

RSJ: In other words, am I the only guy out here walking?

MN: Oh, I see what you mean.

RSJ: You know, with your feelings, it'd be different, when you're afraid somebody, I want somebody, and I want em bad. So finally, you kind of brush off your ego, and you sneak a look. That was an awful feeling.

MN: I can see that. And did, you know, when you were back, do you think that people had the same work spirit or the same feeling of loyalty, after the strike, for the company? Did that jell again, also?

RSJ: I, I, no, yeah, I think that did. Generally, there's two sides to a coin. The thing is that, I was never a boss hater, as a matter of fact, I've been offered the job of boss and I turned 'em down. Not at Heywood's. At Florence Stove and other places.

MN: Why would you turn them down?

RSJ: Because I want the, the, you made more money if you weren't a foreman. The foremen didn't get paid, they didn't get paid that much.

MN: Why do people, did they want, a lot of people wanted to be, didn't they?

RSJ: Well, certainly, a lot of them wanted, but because it's insurance that you're going to be there. I was at the age, the hell with the insurance, I wanted it today. Like the young fellas out today. A lot of em that were in the service,

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or this or that, ruined their life because they didn't accumulate any social security and out there at the age they had to get out. As long as you got social security, at least it's something. But they always work, get paid under the table and this and that. They don't think of those things when they're young. Add that's the things that I learned from Tom Binnall, and Lupert Taylor who were two very astute men as far as, they worked hard, they had, it was a terrible job, in the 30's, late 30's, they had strikes, I remember I was just a kid then, they had a strike out at Siebert's. There was 4 feet of snow in the streets, and they were walking the picket line, it was 20 below zero. Those were hard times, No these guys, Lupert and Tom, were pioneers. Tom, Lupert could have gone to work, he was a tremendous cabinet maker. In fact, when he retired he went to New Hampshire, and he was making these big cabinets there, were fabulous sums, but he liked union work and he had his heart set on it, and I don't see why with all the heartaches, it's a tough job, but that's the kind of guys they were.

MN: And they were, worked for the union?

RSJ: They were for the union, exactly. The union first started in this town, I don't remember who was the head and all that, but going back to the history of unions in this town, it hadn't started too long before the, what happens when the United States start busting all these unions because of communism. And the Furniture Workers union of those days was one of them.

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MN: Was it a leftist kind of organization?

RSJ: Originally, they, they all were, they were all leftist, originally, most of them. But United States in the late 30's straightened them all out. Most of them still sounded like, look at, you have _____(unintelligible) union, then this guy up in the state of Washington, geez, he had rather big union, they had all kinds of money and they took back the union movement, perase, for years. You know, the worker, that's the trouble, these guys think that the guys working for a living, he's not too bright, but you had the papers, you had the media, much more so that you ever had. And I think the American people are the best versed people there are in the world, don't you?

MN: For the most part--

RSJ: There are times, when you're in politics, you hate the media because you say one thing and they might print another. But, but they're still there, if they weren't there, I think I'd be looking for them. Sometime, you know. So you can have the outlook, that you're not alone. There's a lot of people in this world, and we don't always agree, but where we agree, things get better.

MN: Did you think of yourself as kind of a radical person or a liberal person?

RSJ: Not, not really that much, you know when I first got out of high school, I, the first job I got, well, I'd been working Florence Stove, shifting molds in the foundry. And

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we didn't have to belong to the union. And then, I had been, always been very avid reader, I read everything, even labels on cans (laughs) and what interested me was these leftists getting in the union movement and how bad it was in a certain phase of this country's, there's such a terrible discretion, there's hardly any work anywhere, and there're these rats, eating on the remains of what we had, things like that, you know, I think that's how I built my philosophy. Then Roosevelt became President, in fact, the first four times I vote for President, I think there was anyone else that was running. And things like that, you know, its -- I remember going in front of the old City Hall which, I saw a paper this week where they called, they said La Grassa's was the old City Hall, it wasn't. The old City Hall was where the parking lot is, it burnt down.

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MN: OK, what were you saying. They were down where the old City Hall used to be?

RSJ: The old City Hall used to be where the parking lot is adjacent to LaGrassa's. That, I saw some paper this week that had LaGrassa's place as the old City Hall. I wasn't. Cause I remember where the old City Hall was, the local used to run amateur boxing bouts and they used to go around

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with a sign so I could have a seat to see the fights. Oh, that was a long time ago. Then I remember going up there, a bunch of us young fellas would be on the grass in front of the Congregational church where we could see the welfare man, I don't want to name him, he was a sheriff, he was the welfare man, he was a _____ (unintelligible), and he was a Republican, That why I'm a democrat. And they, we didn't know anything about being poor. We were all poor, there was no one better then the next guy. We were poor, but we didn't realize it. We were healthy, we enjoyed life, and then we'd go in to see that son-of-a-gun that, "Where's your mother?" _____ (Unintelligible) "Well, she can't speak English." "I want to see her here next week." Jesus, we lived on Greenwood St. we walk all the way up there. I come the next week, "Where's your mother?" You'd get a slip that would, I had a brother and a sister and my mother and I, you'd get a slip for \$12.00 a week. Course, seeing in those old newspapers, things were cheaper then, but they weren't that cheap. And, it, it was funny, we were up in a good world to grow up in. You had so many people that had a little bit and they'd _____ to help you, geez, I remember my Coach Tarpey, coach in high school, he'd get work for me, more work than I could do. Washing windows before you put up the storm wwindows, putting up the storm windows, the old fashioned type, you know, things like that, any time I had nothing to do, "What are you doing, hanging around? I got a job for you." He was very good to me. Then--

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MN: You didn't mind working?

RSJ: No, hey, what the heck. I was out for sports in school and whatever time I had off beside that, course I was older than the other kids, I, by third year in high school, I was too old to play sports because they had an age limit, so I had a lot of time to work. We got out at 1:00 in the afternoon in those days so old coach, Phil Tarpey, say, "It'll keep you out of trouble." And, you know, good people like that. Tom Quinlan, Gardner News, gee, Tom was a kind of guy, he'd walk straight as a ramrod, military man, very proud of his military service, very smart, very good man. Helped more people in this town without them knowing it, that, I knew it, but there were times, when we had the Heywood strike, we were picketing, and who comes up but Tom with a cigarette holder, he was just like Roosevelt, but he was a republican, Tom was, and, "Hey, Rosie, when you gonna end this thing?" Oh, boy, that's just like throwing kerosene on a blaze. I said, "Tom," I says, "you and I can talk this over together without putting on a side show." And, he didn't say a word, went back, then got a call that he wanted to see me, so he had an office and I didn't so I went to see him, I told him just what was what. And, Jesus, when's this thing gonna end? So there was pressure from all over, and--

MNJ: Would they cover it in the news, too?

RSJ: They didn't, they covered our meetings, and it used to burn me up then, and it burned me up yesterday when I was reading

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it that, uh, "A vote was taken but no--", let's see how it went, "no numbers were given as to who voted for and who voted against."

MN: They wouldn't say?

RSJ: Well, we wouldn't take count of the vote, those that voted by ballot, it was hand vote. You gonna count em? You got 800 people in the place. That was satisfactory before that, but when you got to that, we were keeping him in the dark. Why didn't we send someone to count em? I don't think people would have held up their hand that long, either. So--

MN: And what was that leader's name, Tom what?

RSJ: Flynn.

MN: Flynn.

RSJ: F-l-y-n-n. Nice fella, he really was. He had the, Tom was World War I, and I think he went back for awhile, World War II, but I don't remember. But he had two sons, one of them went to military academy, that was the proudest day in Tom's life. We had, I remember, we had a parade here and old Tom would be riding a horse, dressed in his uniform, World War I uniform, nice guy, he was originally from the North Shore, I don't remember, Quincy, and he was a sports columnist for the Gardner News, for years and years, you know, he knew everybody, he'd been at that job that long. But those are good memories and nice people.

MN: And what about, when you said that, afterwards, that you went on to Raytheon? Was that a different kind of environment

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than working in the--?

RSJ: No, I was working on metal. I was working on metal, that's where they made the Hawk missile and I was working on presses, same thing I was doing at Heywood's.

MN: So it was a similar kind of place?

RSJ: Different in the sense of the work that this wasn't all piecework. This was, you did the work, it had to be perfect, you couldn't do piecework because do a piece of that, it had to be inspected by two or three inspectors after you're through; to make sure that the right dimensions and all, because those are very fussy in missiles, apparently, and I was working with aluminum, aluminum.

MN: Oh, aluminum.

RSJ: Yeah, most parts were aluminum parts. And _____ (unintelligible), we got a fella that's out, he cut off two fingers on one of the presses and when he comes back, we may have to lay you off, unless we get another opening. So I spent 7 months there, the guy came back. so I was out of work.

MN: And so where did you go?

RSJ: Construction. I worked construction for a couple years. I had done that previously, when I was younger, off and on. That's when they built the housing for the elderly, I worked there and I worked also at the old Elm St. School, where the college, where the college started, I worked a couple years, but I was getting at the age where it was getting rough to work construction, so that's why up at the Elm St., School,

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the old Elm St. school, I was made a foreman on there. Yeah, then I went to another, the other job I went to was a housing for the elderly, and then I did some work for Gardner State Hospital, geez, I met a friend of mine there, I said, "Geez, are there any jobs open?" "Oh," he says, "there's always jobs open here, " he says, "but they don't pay much. But, " he says, "there's a good pension plan eventually" and so I put in an application and a different, I got signatures from 3 different doctors in town, recommendation, one of them says to me, he says, "What do you want to go to work there, Rosie, they're gonna close in 5 years." He was right, it wasn't 5 years, it was 10 years, but they did close.

MN: That's where the prison is now?

RSJ: Yeah, and he knew that far ahead. What was going on. So I put in 19 years and 7 months for the state.

MN: At that same hospital?

RSJ: Well, when they closed up, I was sent to Shrewsbury. From there I was sent to Rutland, then back to Shrewsbury, back to Rutland, and then I was called up here across from the hospital, spent my last 6 years there.

MN: Across from the hospital?

RSJ: Yeah, over there, the Mental Health Department. I was with them for 7 years, I think, and the --

MN: What did you do for them?

RSJ: I was on maintenance. Mostly painting and hanging pictures,

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anything and everthing. Jack of all trades, and master of none, you know. That was a very good job, but we didn't have any tools, I had to borrow tools from the hospital, they were very, very kind over there. Anytime I wanted anything or if there was something big I wanted, I'd go to the college and borrow from them. And that kept me out of trouble. They're very nice people --

MN: Was that unionized? In the hospital?

RSJ: Oh, yeah.

MN: Were you involved in it then?

RSJ: No, I had had this, after the strike, I slowed down the union activities, I, a member though. The work is too demanding and it's too easy to be mistrusted. It isn't worth it, it doesn't pay that much that you can say, "Well, hey, I can prove this to you." Most people today, in the old days, it used to be "Help thy neighbor". Today it's "Sue thy neighbor." It's the same thing in every, everything you tackle today, it's show me or I'll sue you. So I don't think it's worth it.

MN: Well, I have a last question for you, which is, you're in a pretty good position to think about this, I guess. Where do you think that Gardner is moving now and in the next ten ,years or so?

RSJ: Well, I hate to say this. Personally, I think that Gardner, most of the people will be service people. You

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won't have any, industry is not coming back this way. I don't see it. One way it's unfortunate, another way, industry can't find the help here that, or anywhere in Worchester County that they used to have.

MN: Why is that?

RSJ: Because you, your college kids don't come back here, They graduate from college, they go elsewhere. And I think most of the poeple in town are working, will be working Simplex, as long as Simplex stays open, and, who knows about industry today. Today, it's Simplex, tomorrow, it might be some other company bottom out. There's so much switching of companies, you don't know from one day to the other. The thing is, you got motels and hotels and services, that's what people will be working, services. Gardner is turning out to be a bedroom town. I don't care what anyone says, you have, I was reading in this morning's paper, so many units of Westminster Woods have been sold and out of 21, 11 of them are not from Gardner, they work out of town. Or something, I don't have the numbers right, but those are the things that, small industries are dying out for the simple reasons that you have these kids that do not care to work in wood shops or anything like that. I don't know why the trend has changed, but the thing is, as far as the piecework is concerned, now I look at what you got to work in piecework, you got 20¢ an hour more. The guys say, "20¢ an hour!" Hey, 20¢ an hour in those days, you figure you work 8 hours, it was

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\$1.60 more a day. \$1.60, well, I spend \$12, \$14 a week on cigars now. I used to smoke nickel cigars in those days and make em last. But, you know, life has changed, life has changed tremendously and it's a good, it's, trend is part of the kids getting education. That's, I think that'll slow down, too, because the federal education aiming at their star wars and this and that are punishing the people of this country. First, they shouldn't renege on the help for kids to go to college. I mean, that's the way I feel, I'm not trying to make a speech here, I'm just telling you the way I feel.

MN: I couldn't agree with you more.

RSJ: And, secondly, all right, you are, you have some that have not paid over the years, they'll pay, if you have to light a fire under them. Lot of times I don't feel like paying my income tax, but I can see what'll happen if I don't, do the same with them. Quit giving help to the foreign countries and help this country. This country need help. I'm on the City Council, I've been on this 27 years, 28 years next year, that'll be, be enough for me, and the, we used to get Federal aid, State aid, now we're losing both. We're getting to the point now where our water bill, the way we get it now, the water bill, the sewer bill depends on how much water you use. I got my bill, \$95 for sewer usage, and \$60 for water usage. How 'd they figure. Well, _____(unintelligible).

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I'm still not happy with it. We're going to get to the point where we can't even afford water, which was the cheapest commodity we had. We used to send our bill and your water was included and this and that. The poor people _____ (unintelligible), from the inside I can see, they come out with 2 1/2, the great thing. It isn't a great thing. Now, they reassess your home every three years. It goes up like mad every three years. So that's why your taxes go up. So, the politicians don't like being taxed any more than anyone else, but they're reassessing the prices they have on, on real estate today. My old house, the house that I'm in, two-decker, my father and I bought that for \$3600. It's valued at 75, \$77,000 now. Well, they say you only paid 2 1/2, yeah, ~~you~~ only pay 2 1/2, but, look at the total that I got to pay for.

MN: And you have to pay taxes on whatever they assess that, right?

RSJ: That's right. So we're losing in every way that, and it's our money. I don't know if you read this article about some fella from, I don't, England or Russia or, geez, he says, they take that much money from your pay? The guy was from England, they pay out taxes in England, as you know. And he figured, geez, we're paying alot of, and we are. But we're not paying, I don't care if they don't send anybody to the moon. It's a good thing, geez, let's wait until we can afford it.

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MN: And what about the work ethic? Do you think people in the local area feel differently about work than they used to?

RSJ: I think the, the thing has changed. Talking to different people who are personnel managers, who are hiring and all that. It's beginning to settle down a little bit. It used to be that these poor kids are just working in the interim before being called in the service, and they didn't give a damn. But now they're getting a little more settled, because things are back down as far as being called in the service, and they, they can see a big change. I, I keep checking on things like that, I'm lucky that I got good friends at work in different places, and this and that, and I always ask them the questions. Because it's good for me to know and I can tell my people, they work, you know. Geez, I had this one guy come up to me, he says, "Jesus," he said, he owns a small shop, he said, "I never had trouble," he said, "these people, everything they want," he said, "I give em their birthday off," he said, "I give 'em the day after Thanksgiving off with pay, and Christmas time," he said, "I give 'em two days off, the day before Christmas, the day after with pay. Geez," he said, "I can't get the help I used to get." Well that was about a year ago. About 3, a month and a half ago I went fishing with him, we spend three days, four of us, fishing, and I was talking with him, and this and that. "Well," he says, "it's beginning to change," he says, "I used to hire someone, they'd work two days, two weeks, and

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the first pay they'd get, I wouldn't see 'em anymore. The only time I'd see 'em, they'd come back for that back pay. But," he said, "now it's beginning to change," he says, "they're sticking me." In other words, they're not flying the coop from work, couple weeks, they get out. And he says, "I can see the change coming," and he says, "and it's a relief." For him, you know. He says, "Now I'm at an age I can leave the business to my son," and he says, "I'm not blaming these kids that are working," but he says, "my son," he said, "I don't know if I dare leave the business to them because they'll do the work but when the eight hours is over with, they don't want anything to do with anything." He said, "When you own a factory, your time isn't your own here." And, you know, you learn from things like that, he may have a lot of things and this and that but he deserved every bit of 'em, and know the sons don't want the responsibility. They'll work, oh, they'll work as long as somebody else's in charge, but they won't take over. It's a funny world. Course, course, back in the same thing, where everybody wants to be boss, that, that makes it a tough world too.

MN: Sounds like nobody wants to be boss now.

RSJ: No apparently, he's a, well, you have a lot of things in industry where they go to--. Well, alot of kids get out of college and they figure, they went to college, you should be boss right off the bat.

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MN: And Greenwood St. is named after who?

RSJ: _____, which means in French, Greenwood in English.
_____, Greenwood. _____ is wood, _____
is green.

MN: Oh, OK, OK. And they built three deckers on that street?

RSJ: They built several three deckers and possibly they're
the ones that opened that road, I wouldn't know.

MN: Oh, and what about this Greenwood building next to the
Gardner News?

RSJ: Well, that's probably with the upper Greenwood's. You
know, we used to have sports, you know, play sports, sandlot
baseball and football, and anyone that lived across the Heywood
tracks, way up the hill, those were the cake eaters,--

MN: Cake eaters?

RSJ: Yeah. Instead of calling 'em the rich kids, we called
'em the cake eaters. And we used to have some good times,
played in back of the Elks there where the skating rink is
today, but, that's what they were, the cake eaters. And we'd
go out for sports in high school, you know, oh, we'd give those
guys a hard time. They were good, they had to be good, we
made sure. (Both laugh)

MN: You polished them up.

RSJ: Yeah.

END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE A, SIDE B NOT RECORDED